

REMARKS

Claims 14-27 are all the claims pending in the application.

Claim 20 has been withdrawn as the result of a election requirement.

The claims have been amended to better conform them to U.S. patent practice and to address antecedent basis issues. The amendments are not intended to narrow the scope of the claims.

35 U.S.C. § 112 Rejections

The Examiner has rejected claims 14-19, 21 and 22 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as being indefinite. Applicants have amended claim 14 to address the issues. Therefore, the Examiner is requested to withdraw these rejections.

Prior Art Rejections

The Examiner has rejected claims 14-19, 21, 25-27 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Limberger (U.S. Patent No. 3,759,598) in view of Taub (U.S. Patent No. 4,010,698). Applicants traverse these rejections because the cited references fail to disclose or suggest all of the claim limitations.

The Examiner concedes that Limberger fails to disclose or suggest the claimed curved panels. In order to make up for this deficiency, the Examiner cites to Taub. However, Taub fails to disclose or suggest the claimed curved panels for at least the following reasons. Claim 14 requires:

connection means for restraining said covering panels, wherein said connection means are configured to support under restraint said covering panels and at the same time to impart to said covering panels a curvature with convexity away from the housing zone.

Taub does not disclose curved panels, but on the contrary it discloses a cylindrical (complete) display panel or sign 30, which is wrapped around the assembly between the base 11

and the lowermost shelf 12 (col. 2, lines 34-36). Moreover, Taub states that the cylindrical sign 30 “rests between a circular groove 31 formed in the base 11 and a circular groove 32 formed in the shelf 12” (col. 2, lines 37-40). In addition, Taub discloses that the sign 30 can be shipped as a rectangular sheet, bent into a cylindrical panel along score lines 33, and closed by inserting two tabs 35 into mating slits 34 to maintain the sign 30 in cylindrical form (col. 2, lines 40-45). Thus, the combination of Limberger and Taub does not render the current claims obvious because the cylindrical sign 30 of Taub cannot be considered similar or equivalent to the curved covering panels (see for example, item nos. 13, 13a) of the claimed invention.

In the claimed invention, a particular feature is that the panels are supported under restraint by connection means that are configured to impart to them a curvature with a convexity away from the housing zone. A characterizing feature is that the panels (for example, item nos. 13, 13a), originally plane (see the wording: “impart to them a curvature”), confer a rigidity to the structure of the machine, since they are first bent and then individually hooked to respective longitudinal hooks 22, made in each of the uprights 12, wherein the hooks 22 are configured to secure restrainingly support side panels 13, 13a, and at the same time impart to them a curvature with a convexity away from the zone in which the components of machine M are housed.

Thanks to this configuration of the uprights and the relative hooks, the structure disclosed in the present claims can be mounted and dismounted in a very easy and quick way, ensuring the advantage that an easy substitution of the side panels can be obtained and, at the same time, providing the largest space as possible for the inner components of the machine. Moreover, the present claims do not require that the side panels be pre-shaped with a curvature, but simple plane panels may be used, provided that they are flexible enough to bend themselves when they are assembled to the relative uprights.

In the claimed invention, at the moment in which the flat panels (for example, item nos. 13, 13a) are assembled on the uprights, they are bent and their ends are forcedly inserted inside the hooks (22) of the respective uprights (12). In this way, the assembled panels (13) exert a force against the uprights (12), which confers high structural rigidity to the whole frame.

In other words, each panel (13), when assembled and forcedly bent between two adjacent uprights (12), acts as a strut for the whole frame, thus giving structural rigidity and stability to the assembled frame which, before the panels are mounted, does not have an implicit rigidity.

This feature is clearly apparent from the wording “support under restraint” in the claim, when referred to the connection means for the panels.

Each panel thus becomes an essential structural element of the frame, and not only a covering or wrapping element to delimit an inner area, as happens in Limberger and Taub. This feature is clearly not disclosed or suggested in Taub, wherein a cylindrical sign 30 is simply wrapped around the assembly, rested in respective upper and lower grooves and closed by coupling tabs and slits. The wrapped sign 30 of Taub cannot perform any structural function on the assembly because of the simple wrapping and resting thereof, contrary to the individual curved panels of the present application, which are individually restrainingly hooked on respective hooks provided on each uprights, and wherein the curvature of the panels is imparted (i.e. is forced) at the moment of the assembly thereof on the panels.

Therefore, this feature of panels having a structural function thanks to their curvature imparted at the moment of their assembly on the uprights is not taught or suggested in the prior art documents.

Regarding the rejection of claims 22-24 based on Limberger, Taub, Rauls and/or Priesemuth, these claims should be allowable at least based on their dependence from claim 14 for the same reasons described above.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

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